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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES CHECKPOINT INCIDENTS,
REGIONAL CONFERENCE, PKK WITH TURKISH AMBASSADOR

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) Summary: At a February 18 luncheon at Ambassador Khalilzad's residence, he and Turkish Ambassador Derya Kanbay discussed recent checkpoint incidents involving Kanbay and other Turkish Embassy personnel. Kanbay expressed understanding for the difficult circumstances under which U.S. soldiers work, but astonishment at the checkpoint incident involving his vehicle. Ambassador Khalilzad told Kanbay that U.S. soldiers had the right to search diplomatic cars. He told Kanbay he would look into possible modifications of the rules permitting searches of ambassadors' vehicles. The two ambassadors discussed possible scenarios for regional conferences of Iraq and its neighbors and agreed to stay in touch as plans developed. Kanbay rejected an amnesty for PKK members in northern Iraq. End Summary.

Checkpoint Incidents

¶2. (S) Turkish Ambassador Kanbay expressed understanding for the difficulties U.S. soldiers face in Iraq but expressed concern that he would be deemed to have agreed to a waiver of diplomatic privileges and immunities by submitting to searches at International Zone (IZ) checkpoints. Ambassador Khalilzad noted there was some disagreement on the facts regarding the February 6 IZ checkpoint incident involving Kanbay's vehicle.

¶3. (S) Kanbay called the attitude of the soldiers at the checkpoint "astounding." He said that the soldiers demanded that both doors of his car be opened and failed to explain what they were doing. When a guard referred him to another checkpoint for what he believed would be a continued search, Kanbay ordered his convoy back to the Turkish Embassy. Kanbay relayed other two prior checkpoint incidents involving other Turkish Embassy personnel the week prior to the February 6 incident.

¶4. (S) Ambassador Khalilzad stated that U.S. soldiers had the right to search diplomatic cars and expressed doubt that U.S. soldiers at checkpoints are singling out Turkish Embassy personnel; he noted that even Iraqi Government Ministers had complained about treatment at checkpoints. Ambassador Khalilzad thanked Kanbay for his expression of understanding of the difficult circumstances under which U.S. troops operate; sometimes they make mistakes and are not properly deferential. Coalition diplomats are important to Iraq's success, he said.

¶5. (S) Ambassador Khalilzad told Kanbay that we will provide the Turkish Embassy a copy of the rules governing checkpoint procedures and said he would review checkpoint rules to see whether modification is possible. (Note: MNF-I is preparing

a scrubbed version of the classified SOPs. End note.)

Turkish Engagement with Iraqi Kurds

¶16. (S) Ambassador Khalilzad told Ambassador Kanbay that he is urging Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) leaders to engage with Turkey. Kanbay speculated that KRG PM Nechirvan Barzani's proposed February 17 meeting with FM Gul was postponed for political reasons; PolCounselor reported that our understanding is the postponement was due to Gul's sudden trip to Saudi Arabia.

¶17. (S) Kanbay said Turkey wants to open a second border gate with northern Iraq but still could not agree on the location. Kanbay said that a "misunderstanding" earlier in the month about fuel trade had been resolved.

Makhmour

¶18. (S) Ambassador Khalilzad told Kanbay he had received positive reports about developments at Makhmour refugee camp; he hoped some camp residents could return to Turkey. Kanbay said that some may not be willing to return. Turkey wants the camp closed, he added. Kanbay predicted that the future of the 11,600 camp residents could be solved "easily": Turkish citizens can automatically return to Turkey, criminals would be referred to the court system, those needing medical care would receive it. He expressed surprise at the number of women and children in the camp.

Regional Conferences

¶19. (S) Ambassador Khalilzad told Kanbay he had spoken with FM Zebari, who wants the next Iraqi neighbors conference held in Baghdad on March 11-12; Zebari had agreed to the DFM/ambassador level. After that, there is an initiative to hold the next meeting outside Baghdad at the FM level, in either Cairo or Istanbul, and include the G-8 and P-5 in addition to neighbors, Egypt and Bahrain. Ambassador Khalilzad told Ambassador Kanbay he would discuss this proposal with GOI leaders. The GOI is concerned that the meetings not give the image of Iraq being "summoned" by other countries who will then decide Iraq's fate, and about not losing control of the agenda.

¶110. (S) Kanbay said the GOT wants to make sure that details about the meeting venue and representation level not prevent the process from moving forward. The GOT is also seeking broad participation. The GOT was contemplating a February date for the Baghdad meeting and is willing to provide participants air transportation from Istanbul to Baghdad. There were also discussing the possibility of a third meeting.

¶111. (S) Kanbay said the GOI is willing to include the P-5 and G-8 in the meetings to expand their possibilities for support and to counterbalance the influence of regional actors. The two ambassadors agreed to stay in touch with each other and with the Iraqi MFA about the conference proposals.

PKK

¶112. (S) Kanbay said the KRG is using the PKK as a "bargaining chip." He complained that PKK militants are moving about freely in the KRG, receiving medical care, and holding "official meetings." Ambassador Khalilzad said he had discussed the PKK with KRG President Barzani and Iraqi President Talabani, who both consider the PKK a problem but doubted that a purely military solution would solve it. They suggested that an amnesty might isolate more hard core militants and then make the problem militarily soluble. Ambassador Khalilzad told Kanbay he had told Barzani and Talabani that the status quo with regard to the PKK cannot continue.

¶13. (S) Kanbay said that past amnesties during the Ecevit era had loosed criminals on the streets and Turkey is now extremely sensitive about the amnesty idea, particularly coming from Iraqi Kurdish leaders. He asked rhetorically how the US would feel about amnesty for al-Qaeda members. The fight against the PKK has cost Turkey lives, money and prestige. Turkey has taken steps to reach out to its ethnically-Kurdish citizens, and the PKK is losing its identity.
KHALILZAD